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An Account of an Enquiry into the State of 275 Poor Families in the City of Bristol.—From the First Report of the Statistical Society of Bristol.

THE Statistical Society of Bristol is engaged in an enquiry into the condition of the working classes in that city, and has already published one Report, containing an Abstract of the Returns obtained from the parish of Temple.

This parish, at the census of 1831, contained a population of 7,088 persons, occupying some of the poorest and most wretched dwellings in the city. The high road to Bath and London intersects it, so that it becomes a favourite resort of travelling lodgers. To this cause also may be ascribed the high proportion of families per house, as exhibited in the returns. It contains several manufactories of different kinds, but as neither in this parish, nor in the city generally, is there one leading manufacture, like the cotton trade of Manchester or the woollen trade of Leeds, the population is extremely miscellaneous.

Little reluctance on the whole was shewn to satisfy the enquiries of the agent. Out of 280 families, he met with only five absolute refusals, but some excitement was caused by the enquiry in different parts; and upon particular points, such as the condition of the sleeping-rooms, savings-bank deposits, &c., it was not always practicable to obtain information, even from an otherwise willing witness. The enquiry was at first carried on without including the queries relative to *country, religious professions, and economical habits*. The deficiency as to these particulars extends to about 50, out of the 275, families. No pains, however, were spared to render the investigation as complete and precise as possible—the agent returning more than once to the same house, if not able on his first visit to procure all the requisite information; and the Council expresses its belief that the results are as nearly accurate as can be expected in an investigation of this kind, and exhibit a correct view of the general condition of the labouring classes in the district.

The number of houses examined was 166; the condition of which may be inferred from the following particulars:—In 108 cases there were drains or sewers, and in 58 there either were no drains, or they were stopped; in 54 out of the 166 houses privies were wanting, or they were in a very bad condition; and in 83, or exactly half the number, there was either no water, or the supply was very bad and insufficient. In 126 instances, the apartments occupied by the families were airy, and in 149 they were close and confined.

The total number of families was 275, or 1·66 to each house. They consisted of 1049 individuals, giving an average of 3·82 to each family, and 6·32 to each house. Of the 275 heads of families, 101 were labourers, 18 charwomen, 16 shoemakers, 9 smiths, 9 carpenters, &c., 12 laundresses and sempstresses, and the remaining 110 were following various trades and occupations: 22 out of the whole number were in the receipt of parochial relief. By far the greater proportion were English: of 227 families, 215 were English, 7 Irish, 4 Welsh, and one was Dutch.

Of the heads of families, 197 were married couples; 22 were single men or widowers; and 57 were single women or widows: 205 families

had children; 70 had none. The number of children was 576, or an average of 2·81 to each family. Of these, 286 were boys, and 290 were girls: 210 of the former, and 212 of the latter, were below 14 years of age.

The following were the number of persons in each family :—

Persons	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	More than 8	Total.
Families	31	54	46	50	40	28	12	8	6	275

The number of families occupying one room only was 123; 105 occupied two rooms; and 47, three or more rooms.

In 175 instances the families rented their house or apartments from the owner, and in 100 instances from tenants.

The average rent paid by 84 families for 1 room unfurnished was	£	s.	d.	
„ „ 69 „ 2 rooms „	0	1	3½	per week.
„ „ 18 „ 3 „ „	0	2	0½	„
„ „ 23 „ 1 room furnished was	0	2	5½	„
„ „ 2 „ 2 „ „	0	2	9	„
„ „ 61 „ houses	8	14	4	per ann.
„ „ 18 not ascertained.				

275

The highest annual rent of the 61 houses was 20*l.*, and the lowest was 3*l.* 10*s.*

The average rent of 12 houses not exceeding 5 <i>l.</i> was	£.	s.	d.
„ „ 23 „ between 5 <i>l.</i> and 10 <i>l.</i> „	4	4	8
	7	12	8
Average of 35 . .	6	9	4
„ „ 26 „ of 10 <i>l.</i> and upwards was	11	15	0
Average of 61 . .	£ 8	14	4

With respect to the physical condition of the families, 182 were clean and healthy, including the middling clean; 16 were clean, but not healthy; 62 were dirty, but healthy; and 11 both dirty and unhealthy. Of the children, 545 were healthy, and 31 unhealthy: 96 families were reported to be in distress, and in great want of food, bedding, or furniture.

One of the great obstacles to the maintenance of neatness and comfort in the rooms of the labouring classes is a want of sufficient cupboards or shelves. Among the 275 families, 98 were not deficient in this respect; 140 had some, but insufficient accommodation; and 37 had none whatever; 134 men asserted that they had sufficient skill in the use of carpenters' tools, to mend their own furniture; 79 acknowledged that they had not. A strong test of the neatness of this class of persons is the number and nature of the prints which appear on their walls. No description is given in the present account of the pictures observed; but it is stated that 181 families possessed some, while 92 had not any. Of 207 heads of families, to whom the question was put, 35 acknowledged that they were either depositors in savings' banks, or members of benefit societies or trade clubs.

The following facts illustrate the intellectual condition of the population examined :—Among 473 heads of families, including females, 234 stated that they could read and write with a greater or less degree of proficiency; 99 that they could only read; 137, or a proportion of 29 per cent., did not pretend to be able to do either: 213 families possessed books or tracts, or parts of some, and of this number 92 had either a Bible or Prayer Book, or both; 60 had not a book of any kind, nor a tract. Of the 576 children, 101 were stated by their parents to be able to read and write; 173 to read only; while 146 above 7 years of age, and 156 under that age, could not do either. The larger proportion of them could repeat the Lord's prayer, viz., 405 out of 576; 42 above 7 years of age could not repeat it; to whom must be added 129 who were under that age, and therefore too young, or who were not accounted for.

The total number of children at school was 182. The following particulars will shew the character of the deficiency in this respect:—

	Below 8 years of age.	From 8 to 14 years.	Above 14.	Total.
Children attending day-schools	92	39	4	135
„ Sunday-schools	9	31	7	47
Total . .	101	70	11	182
Children not at school	251		143	394

Of the 251 children under 14 years of age, 103 were less than 3 years old, and therefore too young for school. The proportion of those between 3 and 14 who were at school is 54 per cent.

The payments made by the parents for the instruction of their children were as follows:—

Rates of payment per week	1d.	2d.	3d.	4d.	6d.	7d.	8d.	12d.
Numbers paying	28	54	13	10	1	2	2	1

Besides the above, 64 were taught gratis, chiefly in the Sunday-schools; and 7 were paid for by friends.

126 children had been brought up to trade, or to some useful occupation; 28 above the age of 14, and 422 below that age, had not been so brought up. Of the 163 girls who were of an age to sew and wash, 68 could sew, and 84 could both sew and wash.

The above returns are not only valuable in themselves, as indicating the social and intellectual condition of a numerous body of poor families in Bristol, but as they afford the means of comparing the state of the poor in that city with their state in other towns in which similar enquiries have been prosecuted. Accounts have already appeared of such investigations in Manchester, Miles Platting, Marylebone, and Herefordshire; and enquiries of the same nature have been commenced in Liverpool by the Statistical Society of that town.